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***Granholm signs into law Stamas bill toughening
sentencing guidelines for boating hit-and-run***

Lansing – Today, Gov. Jennifer Granholm signed into law legislation introduced by state Sen. Tony Stamas (R-Midland) toughening the punishment for the operator of a boat involved in a hit-and-run accident resulting in death or a crippling injury.

This change, from a misdemeanor to a felony, makes the penalty for this crime the same as those for causing a hit-and-run accident in an automobile.

The bill-signing ceremony took place in the governor's office in the State Capitol and was attended by members of the family of Brent Veitengruber.

In September 2002, 33-year-old Brent Veitengruber of Linwood was killed in a hit-and-run boating accident on Wixom Lake in Gladwin County. The operator of the other boat was convicted of negligent homicide and negligent crippling, a two-year high court misdemeanor, and was sentenced this July to one year in jail.

“This was a tragic accident that had a devastating effect on an entire family,” Stamas said. “It only made common sense to make this necessary change in the law. The Veitengruber family has gone through so much, and they have played such an active role in getting this law changed. Their activism has made a difference in making sure others recognize the severe consequences of their actions and that this loophole in the law is closed.”

The Veitengruber family issued the following statement: “The family of Brent Veitengruber is glad that this law has finally been changed. We appreciate Tony Stamas, the Michigan Legislature and Governor Granholm for helping make sure that no family has to endure what we went through during the sentencing process.”

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Currently, the driver of a boat involved in such an accident is guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to a maximum sentence of 90 days. Under the changes made by Stamas in Senate Bills 658 and 659, someone guilty of failure to stop at the scene of a marine accident causing death will be guilty of a felony punishable by up to 15 years in prison and up to \$10,000 in fines.

Someone guilty of failure to stop at the scene of a marine accident causing serious impairment will be guilty of a felony punishable by up to five years in prison and up to \$5,000 in fines.

Senate Bills 658 and 659 have been assigned Public Act numbers 231 and 232 of 2003.

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Editor's note: A photo of the Veitengruber family at the bill signing ceremony is available for download on the Senate Majority Photowire at:
<http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/photowire/Stamas/Stamas.htm>